If the thousands of people who use the Nimitz Freeway along the Oakland rim had not been at their tv sets waiting for the third game of the World Series to start, the quake of '89 would have wiped out a good chunk of our local population. People who were on the lower deck of the Cypress were swatted like flies when the upper deck folded up like an accordian. It was the end of the world for many. One man survived for several days in a concrete pocket, but he died a few days after his rescue. We go along day to day thinking how we have everything under control, then nature reminds us that there is no real security. The earth shifted on October 17, 1989, at 5:04. Rush hour traffic. People driving felt their cars start bouncing around. Many assumed they had a flat tire and pulled off to the side of the road to have a look. Once there, they found others like them, kicking their tires. The quake lasted 15 seconds of human time and people were puzzled. One woman I talked to said a gas station attendant told her she really had great shocks.

I was in bed when it all started. I worked in the garden, planted some Swiss chard, rearranged some of my bookcases, then laid down to rest. Clara had gone to her workout session over in Alameda. She drove back over the Cypress just after three. We talked to others who had gone through there just minutes before the collapse. In Santa Cruz, near the epicenter of the quake, her daughter left a bookstore on the mall just five minutes before the building collapsed into rubble.

Everything in my room shook. Books I had just arranged came falling down around me. The walls shook and my bed was riding around. I felt like the kid in POLTERGEIST. Clara was under the kitchen table.

When it stopped, or we thought it had stopped, we went outside. Neighbors were on the street. We all comforted each other. People who seldom spoke to us were friendly and affable.

Back in the house, I got the tube on. Channel 7 had their emergency power on and they were back onscreen. Cheryl Jennings took charge and pulled things together. During the next few hours we watched what had happened around the area as she read the bulletins coming in. We saw the section of the Oakland Bay Bridge that had fallen, the long section of the Cypress which had crumbled, the huge fire in the Marina, and we knew as we watched this coverage of the major damage that things were a lot worse for people without money to deal with the crisis. People were trapped in elevators. Water and gas mains were ruptured in some areas.

I was scheduled to work at Ashkenaz as usual that Tuesday evening, so I went on to work at 7:30, mainly to see what would happen and talk to some of the people from the neighborhood who were likely to drop in. Cajun dancing was scheduled and six people showed up. Two were unaware of the Quake. If you were driving and did not have the radio on and you were not a tv-oriented person, it was easy to remain ignorant of the whole thing the first few hours. One man had driven over from Tiburon, which means he came via the Richmond-San Rafael bridge which is on the opposite side of the bay and he hadn't felt anything. Things were normal on that side, though I suspect he might have seen the plume of black smoke over the Marina if he had looked in that direction. When I talked to people who had been in the parking lot at Candlestick Park having tailgate parties before the game, they said there was a pall of black smoke hanging over the entire area. Traffic was gridlocked everywhere and many slept in their pick-ups and vans in the parking lot rather than try the roads.

For the last few weeks, the Quake has given everyone something in common to talk about. Most conversations begin with where people were and what they were doing during the Big One. It was a great time to bar hop. No problem with an opening line that evening. The stores had a hell of a time. Bottled liquor and juice was all over the place. At a corner liquor store, wine was flowing out the door and down toward the gutter. The manager had to close because of the broken glass and the mess. The streets in San Francisco were filled with glass. During the quake, it rained plate glass in Union Square. Our friend Evelyn was in the Berkeley Theater watching OLD GRINGO when the walls started to shake and people just screamed in panic and bolted for the exits, pushing and shoving each other.

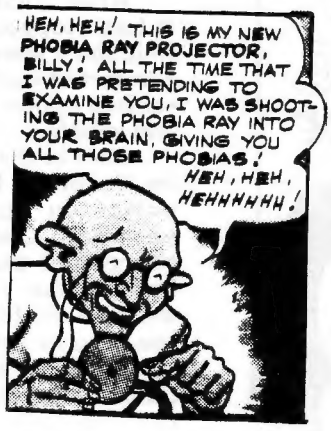
Since the media coverage you saw came out of San Francisco, the external view of the Quake damage was distorted for several days. We found out later that there had been severe damage on Treasure Island and people had been virtually trapped there for most of this last month. We have family and friends in Santa Cruz and there was major damage all over that community. The downtown mall was destroyed and most of the historic buildings had to be bulldozed. Houses were destroyed in the hills and some areas were isolated for a long time by mudslides on the roads.

The media people tended to focus on the middle-class and one seldom saw the condition of the poorer neighborhoods in the Bay Area, but the local media did a great job unifying and reassuring people. They worked round the clock and got the information out, told people where they could volunteer, who needed what, when and where. They gave us the big picture and we developed a lot of respect for Cheryl Jennings, Anna Chavez, Tony Russamano, Carol Ivy, Don Sanchez, and the others who got right into pulling things together and offsetting panic. They kept us informed about closed routes and fires and gas and water outages. The Red Cross and Salvation Army were at work minutes after the quake and after a few days they had more donations of clothing and goods than they had room to store.

What was toughest about the quake was the fearful attitude that came in its wake. We live near a bus line and whenever the bus passes, our house trembles a bit. Normally, we pay no attention, but now when something is moving around the kitchen that ought to be still we get that look. Aftershock? Is it going to happen again? The next morning when we went for the mail and to do some shopping, I expected to find the stores crowded with people stocking up, but the quake had not hit the neighborhood hard and for the most part people were sitting around eating Chicago pizza and going about their business as though nothing had happened. What you do after a disaster is try to go on with normal habits, to do what you would ordinarily do. We bought a few things for supper, got the mail, and drove home.

– C. L. '89 –

CAPTAIN MARVEL JR.
FEBRUARY
10¢
NO. 46
MAGIC LIGHTNING THUNDERS DOWN AT THE MYSTIC NAME AND CONVERTS BILLY BATSON INTO HIS OTHER FORM OF MIGHTY CAPTAIN MARVEL!
BOOM


HEH, HEH! THIS IS MY NEW PHOBIA RAY PROJECTOR, BILLY! ALL THE TIME THAT I WAS PRETENDING TO EXAMINE YOU, I WAS SHOOTING THE PHOBIA RAY INTO YOUR BRAIN, GIVING YOU ALL THOSE PHOBIAS! HEH, HEH, HEHHHHH!

MISC. 32. 1.75 from Gary Paske, 4841 Birch Lane, Gilbert, MN 55741-9631.

CHARLES CLARENCE BECK
JUNE, 1910-NOV 22, 1989

I confess. When I was nine-years-old, I was a Captain Marvel Groupie. I never knew that Otto Binder wrote most of the stories or that C. C. Beck designed the character and pencilled the majority of the early stories. I just knew that the Big Red Cheese was my kind of character. I bought all the Captain Marvels and neatly kept them in a box near my bed. My mother threw them all away when we moved to California for the first time.

An illustrator from Minneapolis, Minnesota, C. C. Beck got the assignment of visualising a character conceived by Bill Parker named Captain Thunder. Originally, he had written a script in which six superheroes shared the lead, but Ralph Daigh, the executive director of Fawcett Publications, wanted one hero to compete with DC's Superman, not six.

Beck got into cartooning through a correspondence course. Later, he studied at Layton, then at the Chicago Academy and the University of Minnesota. He enjoyed his music as much as his art and the last time I saw him he was playing his guitar and singing folksongs at a San Diego Comic Convention. Leslie Carbarga, who did the book on Max Fleischer, accompanied Beck on the piano.

In 1933, Beck was working for Fawcett in Robbinsdale, Minnesota. He did panel cartoons for little mags like WHIZ BANG and SMOKEHOUSE MONTHLY. It was 1939 when he was moved into the front line and given his chance with Captain Thunder who was renamed Captain Marvel before his debut in WHIZ #1. The first WHIZ was hurried together for copyright purposes, but was changed before it was sent in or published, and Beck had to re-ink the name of the character on all of the artwork. It was the printer who decided Captain Marvel would read a suit of red underwear with a yellow lighting bolt on his chest. Artists had no control over the color scheme at the time.

Captain Marvel was a big financial success and all through the 1940's, there were spin-offs like THE MARVEL FAMILY, CAPTAIN MARVEL JR., and MARY MARVEL. It was Bill Parker who created the evil scientist, Dr. Sivana, by combining two Indian words, Siva and Nirvana. Sivana was Captain Marvel's Nemesis for nearly thirteen years. Ed Herron became Comic Editor at Fawcett October 10, 1940. He created Captain Marvel Jr. and brought Otto Binder and C. C. Beck together. The prolific Binder wrote 451 of the 618 Captain Marvel stories, 69 of 98 Mary Marvels, 162 Marvel Family adventures, and 161 Captain Marvel Jrs. He wrote 986 of 1743 stories or 57% of the entire Marvel saga (data from THE STERANKO HISTORY OF THE COMICS, V. 2, p. 12). Born August 26, 1911, Binder's creations include Mary Marvel, Tawky Tawny, the Talking Tiger, and Mr. Mind, the little worm who set out to rule the world. For other publishers, Binder invented the Young Allies, Miss America, Kid Eternity, Uncle Sam, Captain Battle, and Astounding Man. In his spare time, he wrote 27 S-F and horror stories for Bill Gaines at EC. Binder was inspired to go into a pulp writing career when he read the first issue of AMAZING STORIES in 1926. His brother Earl got into it first with Otto editing and soon the boys were jamming stories as Eando Binder. Otto wrote over 50,000 pages of comics!

Beck started his own shop in 1941 and freelanced his stuff to Fawcett. He edited violence out of his stories. DC sued Fawcett on September 5, 1941, but the suit did not go to trial until March of 1948. DC lost, but won on appeal. Captain Marvel was never a newspaper strip due to the lawsuit. Binder told Sterako (p. 21) Fawcett settled out of court, because the comics had peaked for them and they were just doing the smart thing financially by phasing them out in 1953.

Beck moved his studio to Florida, but did not find success in comics again. FATMAN failed in 1966.

— Clay Geerdes
1989.